

Chechnya and Russia, but never let threats to her life dissuade her from her passion. She was once quoted as saying, "journalists have a duty to report on the subject that matters, just as singers have to sing and doctors have to heal."

Despite her critical attitude toward her country's political leadership, Anna Politkovskaya possessed a deep warmth and love for its people. She cared for Russia, and wanted nothing else for the country and its people than to see it become a true democracy free from corruption and fear. Her death, said former Russian leader Mikhail Gorbachev, "... is a savage crime against a professional and serious journalist and a courageous woman. It is a blow to the entire democratic, independent press. It is a grave crime against the country, against all of us."

Madam Speaker, the Russian government has announced the arrest of several persons implicated in Anna Politkovskaya's murder, and the actual shooter has reportedly been determined. However, the investigation itself appears to have raised more questions than answers, which is, unfortunately, a characteristic of many high-profile investigations in Russia nowadays. Let us hope that the investigation will be brought to a successful conclusion, and that Anna Politkovskaya's killers, who or wherever they are, will be brought to justice.

HONORING COACH BOB ROMBACH RETIREMENT

HON. KENNY MARCHANT

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, October 5, 2007

Mr. MARCHANT. Madam Speaker, I rise today to honor Duncanville High School Panther Baseball Coach Bob Rombach for 39 years of dedicated coaching and teaching.

After graduating from Denton High School in 1961, Coach Rombach signed a professional baseball contract with the Houston Colt 45's organization. He spent the off-seasons studying for his Bachelor's Degree and graduated in 1968 from North Texas State University.

His first coaching position was in Amarillo. Since then he has led five different baseball programs and is recognized as one of the most successful and respected coaches in Texas High School Baseball. Coach Rombach's accolades are not only numerous but prestigious as well. He has been named Texas Coach of the Year twice, received a number of district honors and was coach of the North-South All-Star Game. In November of 1990, Coach Rombach was elected into the Texas Baseball Hall of Fame after guiding the Panthers to the Class 5A State Championship. In 2000, he was selected by the Texas High School Baseball Coaches Association for the Hall of Fame.

As coach of the Duncanville Panthers, Coach Rombach's teams have reached the playoffs 22 times in 23 seasons. They have earned a trip to the Texas State Tournament in Austin six times and won the state title in 1990. His career record is 859 wins and 362 losses and his record at Duncanville High School is 565 wins with 180 losses. During his distinguished tenure at Duncanville, Coach Rombach has seen thirty of his players drafted with nine playing in the big leagues.

Coach Rombach and his wife, Deanna, have three children: daughters, Amy and Tracy and son, Deron, who is a national cross checker for the Baltimore Orioles. They have seven grandchildren.

Madam Speaker, in closing I would like to commend and congratulate Coach Bob Rombach on all of his accomplishments. His dedication and commitment to coaching and teaching is worthy of recognition. I wish Coach Rombach a happy and healthy retirement and it is an honor to represent him in the 24th District of Texas.

PROVIDING FOR CONSIDERATION OF H.R. 3648, MORTGAGE FOR- GIVENESS DEBT RELIEF ACT OF 2007

SPEECH OF

HON. KENDRICK B. MEEK

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, October 4, 2007

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to be a co-sponsor to this bill that will provide relief to those people in my district, the entire State of Florida, and the country as a whole who are losing their homes.

Foreclosures in south Florida are escalating way too quickly. They have tripled in Miami-Dade County and more than doubled in Broward County from this time last year. In fact, Florida as a whole is second only to Nevada in new foreclosures from January through March of this year.

Why this fast increase in foreclosures? Mostly because lenders gave high-priced loans to borrowers during the housing boom, particularly borrowers in low-income, largely minority neighborhoods. Starting in 2000, because property values were rising quickly, financial institutions made risky loans that put them and the borrowers in jeopardy. About \$1.3 trillion in subprime loans was lent to these borrowers. Specifically to south Florida, in Miami-Dade, about 23 percent of these loans are subprime—in Broward about 18 percent are subprime—in Miami Gardens about 66 percent are subprime.

Florida homeowners are now bearing about one tenth of that 1.3 trillion dollar debt. This is more than any other state except California. Now the value of these homes is declining but these homeowners have this huge outstanding mortgage debt. It's bad enough that these homeowners are losing their homes, but under current law they would also have to include their discharged mortgage debt in their income and pay tax on it.

This bill will give some relief to those homeowners by eliminating that tax. Equally important, the bill will help those homeowners who are doing their best to avoid foreclosures—those that are having a portion of their mortgage discharged as part of a restructuring of their debt.

It is time for those homeowners in Florida and elsewhere to get this badly needed tax relief.

MEJA EXPANSION AND ENFORCEMENT ACT OF 2007

SPEECH OF

HON. JOHN D. DINGELL

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, October 4, 2007

The House in Committee of the Whole House on the State of the Union had under consideration the bill (H.R. 2740) to require accountability for contractors and contract personnel under Federal contracts, and for other purposes:

Mr. DINGELL. Mr. Chairman, I have followed with interest news reports from Iraq documenting some of the terrible atrocities that have been committed at the hands of military contractors hired by the United States. I have been keenly interested in the recent congressional hearings that have been held on this matter. Based on what I have learned, I am pleased today that the House of Representatives is considering this bill, which would ensure that those who do business with the United States Government in Iraq can be held accountable when they commit criminal acts. Unfortunately, I cannot be present for the vote today, but I wanted to ensure I submitted this statement of support so the record will reflect that I am strongly in favor of the goals of this important bill.

This bill is a fair and sensible way to ensure that military contractors can be prosecuted for their criminal actions in a U.S. court. This is important both because it gives the government a way to police the behavior of these contractors, and also because it shows the Iraqi people that the United States is serious about the rule of law. While I am glad Congress is taking this action now, I remain concerned about the Bush Administration's failure to take steps to investigate or prosecute those who committed wrongdoing in the past. I believe Congress should continue to investigate these incidents and ensure that those responsible are held accountable.

TRIBUTE TO COMMAND SERGEANT MAJOR FRANK D. GROSS

HON. IKE SKELTON

OF MISSOURI

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, October 5, 2007

Mr. SKELTON. Madam Speaker, let me take this moment to recognize the extensive career of Command Sergeant Major Frank D. Gross. CSM Gross has spent over 41 years serving in the Missouri Army National Guard and Engineer Regiment.

Frank Gross earned a master's degree in education from Central Missouri State University. In 2001, he successfully completed the U.S. Army Sergeants Major Academy. During his career, CSM Gross has been awarded over 18 medals and ribbons for his selfless leadership and dedication. He is highly respected by his peers, as well as by the soldiers who he has led.

CSM Gross's service to our country in war-time has been invaluable. Beginning in 2002, Gross served as CSM for the 35th Engineer Brigade for over 2 years, where he supervised the deployment of three battalions and two